



Social Worker Guide to Transitional Planning for Youth



CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION

What do youth need from their social workers to succeed as they prepare for their transition from foster care?

Some quick answers are: Youth need a place to live, a job, money, medical and dental care, a post-secondary education plan, personal records, an adult or adults to turn to for help over time, information about how to accomplish their short and long-term goals for the future, and many other resources.

It's a long list and the train is almost out of the station by age 17.5. So the sooner you begin working with the youth to develop their strong team of support - the more successful their transition will be.

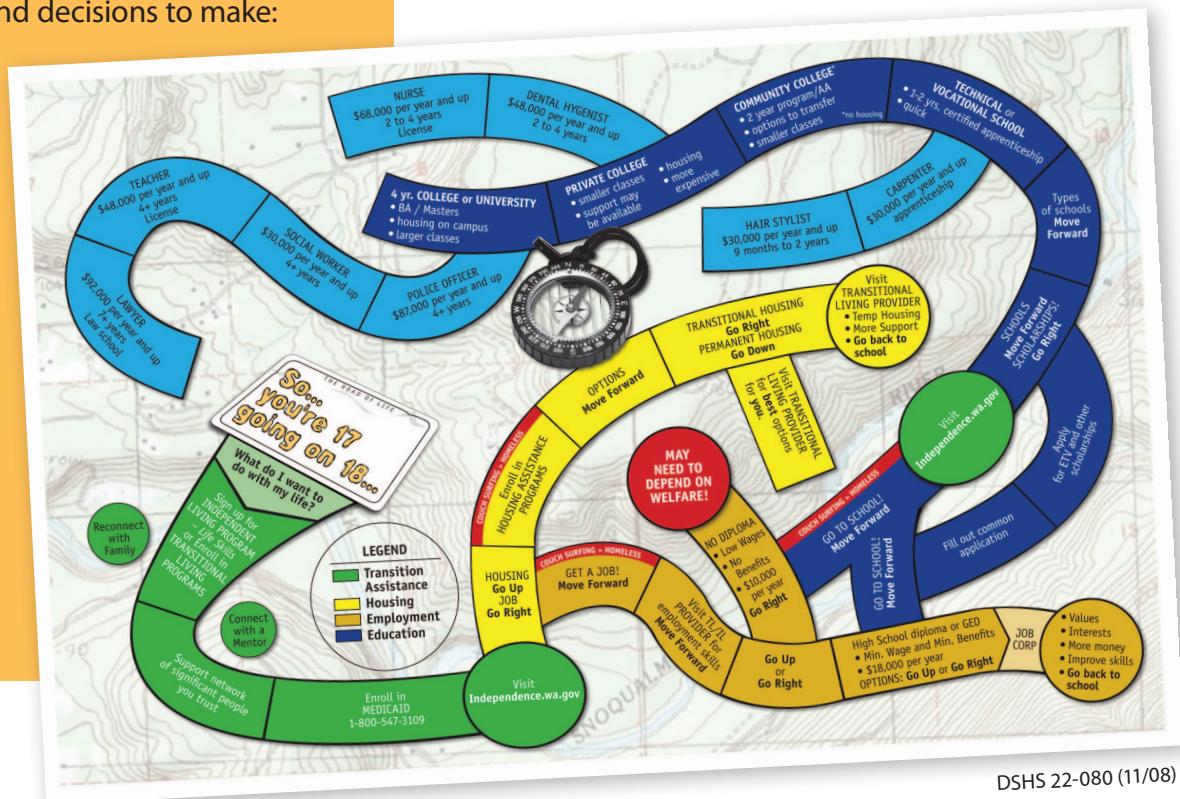
What's important for a social worker to remember in transition planning?

A skilled social worker starts on this task early; they know to develop a good transition plan with each youth they need to:

- develop a good relationship with youth
- work with the youth and community partners to identify a strong team of support
- work with the youth to set goals jointly
- recognize youth's successes, and
- engage youth in meeting these goals

...so that foster youth can experience a successful transition to adulthood.

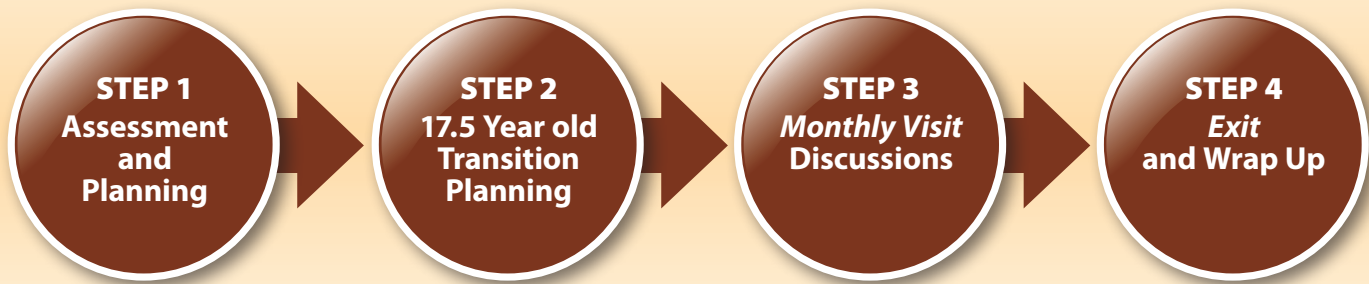
The road there looks a little like this, with lots of choices and decisions to make:



DSHS 22-080 (11/08)



Preparing foster youth to shape a future comes in building blocks and CA policy approaches this in four basic steps.



STEP 1 ASSESSEMENT AND PLANNING

Helping a youth to identify the life skills they need to become self-sufficient will pay dividends in the long run. Youth need experiences and learning opportunities on a day to day basis in order to be successful. Partnering with caregivers, family members and contracted Independent Living providers to assist the youth in gaining these skills is vital. One person cannot do it alone, therefore it is important to identify the youth's support network and engage them in the process.

Beginning at age 15 and annually thereafter, every youth on your caseload is to have an Independent Living (IL) plan that outlines areas of strength and areas needing further development. The IL plan spells out the tasks the youth will complete in order to develop their skills, the identified person(s) who will assist the youth in completing these tasks and the timeframe for doing it.

Tools: CA policy requires social workers to utilize the free online *Casey Life Skills Assessment* tool located at www.caseylifeskills.org when working with youth to develop their IL plan. If the youth is involved with a contracted Independent Living (IL) provider they can assist you with this task. There are contracted IL providers at various locations around the state. Check with your regional IL coordinator to find the providers in your area.

If your youth is currently working with an IL provider and you want to see what services are being provided you can find this information on the IL page in Famlink. To access the IL page:

1. Go to **Planning**,
2. Click the **Independent Living tab**, and
3. Click the "**Independent Living**" hyperlink for that youth, or
4. You may access the IL page by going to the **Utilities** drop down menu on the Famlink home page, click **Independent Living** and search for your youth.



STEP 2 17.5 YEAR OLD TRANSITION PLANNING

Transition Planning and services provide youth exiting care an opportunity to have a smooth and successful transition into adulthood. It is important that this planning begin by age 17 and that youth have a safe and viable transition plan identified before they reach 17.5 years of age. A youth's transition plan is meant to help the youth prepare for the everyday life tasks that he or she will have to accomplish once he or she leaves foster care. Best practice is to engage the youth early in the process - especially before conducting the 17.5 Transition Planning meeting, give them ample notice of the meeting and accommodate their school schedule.

CA Policy requires that each youth have a documented transition plan before they reach 17.5 years of age. You should ask the youth whom they view as important people in their life that they would like to invite to this meeting, extend an invitation to these important people, as well as, any youth allies such as foster parents, family members, IL providers, community partners and other youth to support this youth driven process. You may also arrange phone access for those not able to attend in person.

The Transition Plan for Youth Exiting Care (DSHS 15-417) provides a detailed template for covering all of the vital topics in creating a transition plan. This transition plan can be found on the IL page in Famlink. Click the "Transition Plan for Youth Exiting Care" hyperlink under "Documents" in the "Options Pane" (left hand side of screen) to open the Word document. Once the transition plan is completed in Famlink, print it for both you and the youth to sign. Remember to provide the youth with a copy as this will enable them to visually see what will be happening over the course of the next few months.

Per federal legislation, the transition plan must be youth focused, youth driven and address the specific areas below. We have provided some examples for each.

- **Health Insurance** – Medicaid to 21; local medical resources
 - **Local opportunities for mentors and continuing support** – mentors; interest groups; faith community; advocacy resources
 - **Work force supports and employment services** – Work Force Councils; DVR; Job Corp
- The purpose of the 17.5 Transition Planning meeting is for you to work with the youth and help them develop an individualized transition plan. You may also use this meeting to provide the youth with all necessary documents kept in their CA record and provide the youth with community resources or referrals to services they can access that make their transition more successful (i.e. health care summary, educational opportunities, housing options, identicard, Medicaid to 21 etc). Youth pursuing their secondary or post secondary education should be informed of their option to remain in foster care beyond age 18 through the **Extended Foster Care program**.
- Your knowledge of the youth's background and status, combined with information from the Casey Life Skills Assessment and Independent Living Plan can be used to encourage dialogue with youth about their short and long term goals when they transition out of the system.
- The more involved the youth is with planning their transition the more likely they will be successful. Oftentimes you will notice youth become overwhelmed with anxiety about what life will be like as they prepare to transition from foster care. You may notice that their grades slip; they may sabotage their foster home placement; have poor hygiene and health issues; they may become depressed and withdraw from social interactions. This is their way of dealing with separation and the fact that they will now be living on their own. A strong transition plan can help the youth with this by identifying all the important resources that are available and securing supports for the youth can have a positive impact. Youth need to know that they will not be abandoned and left alone. Therefore, it is vital that we link youth to external support systems in the community. Knowing how to access these resources is a life skill that everyone needs!
- For additional resources on Youth Transition Planning and specific documentation requirements in Famlink go to: http://ca.dshs.wa.gov/intranet/catrng/braam/braam_transition.asp.



STEP 3 *Monthly Visit* • DISCUSSIONS

After the 17.5 Transition Planning meeting is complete, you need to follow up on the transition plan monthly, track any changes and continue offering appropriate resources; you can do this during the Monthly Health and Safety visit in the months that follow until such time as the youth transitions into adulthood.

- During these monthly face-to-face contacts, you provide services by answering any questions the youth may have about their transition per youth's direction, while providing guidance. You will also need to update the transition plan in Famlink based on any changes made.
- Document these visits in case notes under "monthly health and safety visits."
- Within the last 90 days before the youth turns 18 you will need to document in the electronic case notes that you discussed each of the six federally required areas identified above.

Remember there are additional available resources that can aid in the youth's transition:

- Prior to age 18, there may be IL funds available up to \$500.00 to help youth attain a goal that has been identified as part of their transition. Once a youth turns 18, they can access transitional living funds to cover costs associated with housing, employment, food, utilities, transportation, etc. Check with your regional IL Coordinator to access either of these funds.
- The web site www.independence.wa.gov provides information on: jobs, education, financial aid, housing and budget. It would be especially useful for youth in rural areas that do not have access to an independent living program.
- The "So...you're 17 going on 18..." gameboard pocket guide (DSHS 22-080) is a great resource that can be used to help youth with the many decisions they have to make in their transition. This tool enables youth to see the reality of the life choices they make.
- Don't forget youth may elect to remain in foster care beyond age 18 through the **Extended Foster Care program** if they are pursuing their secondary or post secondary education. This program is available until their 21st birthday provided they are active in their educational pursuits. Youth who opt to leave on their 18th birthday have six months from their birth date to re-enter care if they are pursuing their educational goals.

Visit independence.wa.gov
for information about jobs,
education, housing, and more.



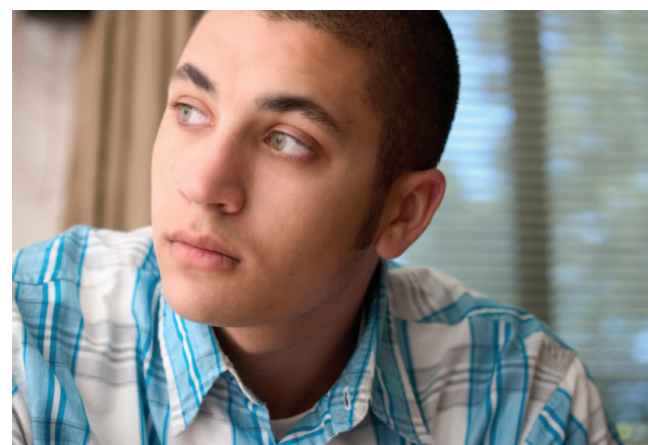
STEP 4 *Exit* • WRAP UP

When youth on your caseload exit care you need to insure they transition to a safe, productive and stable situation. At the time youth exit care, CA policy requires youth receive several documents, which include a full copy of his/her health and education record collected during his/her time in care. You should remind youth about the local Independent Living program's transitional services which are a good support service; it is there for them when they turn 18 through their 21st birthday. You can also direct youth pursuing postsecondary education to apply for ETV, Passport, Governors' or other financial aid scholarships.

What does the Social Worker need to do for the exit interview?

Policy requires you to inform youth exiting care about CA's policies and procedures around the length of time CA keeps a youth's record and how the youth may access his/her record after exiting care. The social worker should:

- Inform the youth of the length of time CA keeps a youth's record and how to access these records once out of care. This is typically done by going to any DSHS office and completing an authorization form (DSHS 17-063).
- Gather all the documents and information indicated on the Transition Plan for Youth Exiting Care (DSHS 15-417) that are available from the case record and/or the IL provider and provide them to the youth prior to their exit from care.
- Review the plan one last time and answer any questions the youth may have.
- If the youth has opted not to participate in the Extended Foster Care program this is another time to talk about this program and to remind youth they have six months from their 18th birthday to opt back in.



THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PREPARING YOUTH FOR THEIR FUTURE

Youth in foster care need a solid educational foundation for a successful future. Only 40% of youth exiting foster care do so with a high school diploma or a GED. Social workers need to hold high expectations for youth. Research has shown that when youth in foster care do not complete some type of post-secondary degree, they are more likely than the general population to be homeless, on public assistance, in prison and earn less over their lifetime. For all youth in out-of-home care, completion of a high school education and access to a post-secondary education such as college or vocational training are critical to their success as adults.

Youth in foster care need support and encouragement from their social worker, teachers, caregivers, IL caseworkers and other caring adults. They also need information and assistance in obtaining and accessing the necessary funds and financial aid to pay for post-secondary education and training. Foster youth should be encouraged to work closely with their high school counselor and their IL case manager while they are in high school.

What are the High School Graduation Requirements?

Requirements to graduate from high school are set by The Washington State Board of Education (www.sbe.wa.gov). However, local school districts have the authority to set graduation requirements in addition to state minimums. Contact the individual school district where the youth attends school to see if there are additional graduation requirements, or visit <http://k12.wa.us/GraduationRequirements/Requirement-CAA-CIA.aspx>.

High School Senior Culminating Project

Students must design and complete a project on a topic of their choice, and present their project to other students, teachers, parents and/or community members. This requirement offers students an opportunity to apply their learning in a “real world” way. Individual school districts set parameters for how students accomplish these projects.

If a youth on your caseload is not on track to graduate you may make a referral to the Treehouse Educational Advocacy Program to explore alternate graduation options, which may include General Education Diploma (GED), certificate of academic achievement or certificate of individual achievement. For more information, go to http://www.treehouseforkids.org/whatwedo/educational_advocacy. Other resources may include the Supplemental Educational Transition Planning (SETuP) program, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate program (GEAR UP) or the Independent Living (IL) program.

Youth with Disabilities

While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will end for youth in the 12th grade, they still have the right to accommodations to support them when they go onto most post secondary programs. 504 plans do not end in 12th grade, so this law and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provide legal protection for youth.

Upon graduation, schools must provide the youth with their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and exit summary which describes their disability and needs. The IEP or 504 Plan can be provided to the post-secondary school so staff can set up a plan to meet the youth’s needs and accommodations to be successful. Each school has a different contact person, but usually they can be found in the Student Services Department.

Transitioning from High School to College for Students with Disabilities

There are several differences between high school and college. In college, the student is responsible for their own self management and advocacy. Additionally, the laws that affect students with disabilities are different. Below is a chart that highlights the differences in services for students between high school and college.



SECONDARY EDUCATION <i>High School</i>	POST SECONDARY EDUCATION <i>College</i>
What is the law?	
Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act particular references in Subpart E (504)
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504)	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992 (ADA)
Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992 (ADA)	
What is the intent of the law?	
IDEA: To provide a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment to eligible students with disabilities, including special education and relative services.	504/ADA: To ensure that no otherwise qualified person with a disability will be denied access to, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by any program or activity at any public institution or entity.
504/ADA: To ensure that no otherwise qualified person with a disability will be denied access to, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by any program or activity at any public institution or entity.	
Who is covered under the law?	
All infants, children and youth requiring special education services until the youth graduates from high school or up to age 21.	All qualified persons with disabilities who meet the entry criteria of the college or program and who can document the existence of a disability as defined by the ADA.
Who is responsible for identifying and documenting the need?	
School districts are responsible for identifying, evaluating, and planning educational services at no expense to the parent or individual.	Students are responsible for self identification and for obtaining disability documentation from a professional who is qualified to assess their disability. The student is responsible for the cost.
Who is responsible for initiating the service delivery?	
School districts are responsible for identifying students with disabilities and providing special instruction, individualized educational plans (IEP), and accommodations.	Students are responsible for notifying staff at the college of their disability and their need for accommodations.



Dual Credit Programs through College Course Enrollment

Below is a list and summary of some of the programs available to youth that allow dual credit through college course enrollment.

Running Start

Running Start allows students in grades 11 and 12 to take college courses at Washington's public community and technical colleges and at Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Washington State University and Northwest Indian College. Running Start students do not pay tuition however they do pay college fees, books and supplies and transportation costs. Students receive both high school and college credit for these classes, therefore accelerating their process through the education system.

Education and Training Running Start Program

Youth who are Running start students are eligible to apply for the ETV Running Start Program to help offset the cost of the student and the foster family for the books and supplies, fees and transportation costs. To apply for the ETV Running Start Program go to: <http://www.independence.wa.gov/programs/etv.asp>.

Tech Prep

The Tech Prep program helps students transition from high school into college professional technical programs. Tech Prep is a cooperative effort between K-12 schools, community and technical colleges and the business community to develop applied integrated, academic and technical programs.

College in the High School

College in the High School is an opportunity for students to be concurrently enrolled in high school and college and to earn high school and college credit in the same course offered on the high school campus. The cost varies at each institution.

For a complete list of dual credit programs, go to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI): <https://www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/CareerCollegeReadiness/DualCredit/default.aspx>.

Things to remember

Students should:

- Meet with their guidance/college counselors to review their four-year academic plan. Request to be placed in challenging courses to expand their knowledge and stretch their mind and that satisfy college admission requirements.
- Choose elective courses that meet college admission requirements and that interest them such as music, art or theater, and world language.
- Focus on their class work, homework, assignments, and other school projects. Continue to build upon and enhance their especially those techniques learned in middle school.
- Participate in school orientation to learn about the different activities available at their high school. Academics should be the focus, but it is important to have a balanced high school experience.
- Get involved in extracurricular activities within their academic community by participating in student organizations, athletics and community service events.



HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR / COLLEGE PREPARATION *timeline*

September and October	<p>When working with high school seniors on your caseload remind the youth to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review their June SAT/ACT scores and decide if they will retake one or both; and help them register for the next exam if necessary. • Obtain all the necessary applications for college admission and double check the deadlines for the schools to which they intend to apply. • Begin writing their application essays for their college applications. • Stay in contact with the representatives of the colleges to which they would like to apply. • Schedule an appointment with their school counselor to review their educational plans and goals and to discuss their four-year plan. • Request letters of recommendation for their college applications. • Save for college housing and enrollment deposits (from \$200-\$400, depending on the school). • Research and apply for additional scholarships.
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend a financial aid workshop with their caregiver/guardians/IL provider. • Continue filling out college and scholarship applications (be sure to remind them to keep copies of everything they send out).
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for a personal identification number (PIN) for filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). www.pin.ed.gov. • Attend a financial aid information session at their high school if they did not attend one in November and/or if they have additional questions. • Meet with their school counselor to go over their final college choices.
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as early as possible (ideally between January 1st and February 15th). Apply online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. • Ask their school counselor to send their first semester transcript to the colleges to which they applied (if the colleges requested them).
February, March and April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep track of all of their applications. They can call or email the college admission office to inquire if their application file is complete. • They should receive their Student Aid Report (SAR) within four weeks after they have submitted the FAFSA. • Meet with their school counselor to discuss their college admissions and financial aid progress. • Once they begin receiving offers of admission, begin contacting the housing offices at the schools about housing options. • They will begin to receive initial financial aid offers from the schools to which they have been admitted. Read their mail/email promptly! • Take advantage of the college's Spring Preview Days that are available at the schools to which they have been admitted.
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make their college decision by May 1st, the National Candidates Reply Date (or earlier if they know), and send in any enrollment/tuition deposit the college has requested. Find out when tuition, room and board, meal plans, etc. are due. • Look for information in their mailbox from their college about housing, orientation, course selection and registration.
June, July and August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request their final high school transcript be sent to the college of their choice and any other scholarship programs that require one. • Attend their college's orientation.



POST SECONDARY EDUCATION & TRAINING

Many youth in foster care think that pursuing education beyond high school or GED is not an option for them. They do not think there is funding opportunities to help pay for the costs. This is not true! In addition to the Extended Foster Care program (which provides the opportunity for youth to remain in care up to their 21st birthday while pursuing their secondary or post secondary education), there are many additional resources available to help foster youth with post secondary education expenses. Remember youth are responsible for the costs associated with their post secondary education. Therefore your role is vital in helping youth understand the resources available to support their education.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

The most important step a youth must take if they have obtained their GED or High School Diploma and plan to attend a college, university, vocational or technical college, is to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

The FAFSA must be completed each year, on or shortly after January 1, to ensure the student receives their financial aid in a timely manner. For information about the FAFSA and to complete the application, go to: www.fafsa.ed.gov/.

After the FAFSA is submitted, the youth should contact each college they provided on the FAFSA to find out if additional information must be submitted. Documents the college may request from the youth include:

- a. The Financial Aid Data Sheet
- b. The Independent Verification Worksheet
- c. Proof of Dependency

It's very important that the youth submits all the required paper work by the college priority deadline.

Types of Financial Aid

Financial aid is awarded by the college and is based on the youth's FAFSA information. Depending on the college the youth is attending, they may be eligible to receive federal, state and institutional financial aid.

There are four types of financial aid:

1. **Grants:** Do not have to be repaid unless the student withdraws from school and owes a refund.
2. **Scholarships:** Provided to a scholar because of academic merit.
3. **Work Study:** Provides part-time employment while the youth is enrolled in college.
4. **Loans:** Youth must pay back to the Department of Education.

Below are examples of federal and Washington state financial aid that a youth may be eligible to receive depending on the type of college they are attending.



Federal Financial Aid	Washington State Financial Aid
Pell Grant Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) Federal Work Study Subsidized Loans Unsubsidized Loans	State Need Grant Passport for Foster Youth Promise Scholarship College Bound State Work Study

Foster youth who attend an eligible Washington State institution of higher education may receive priority funding for the State Need Grant and State Work Study Program. For a list of eligible colleges and universities, go to: http://www.wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/SNG_EligibleInstitutions2012-2013.pdf

SCHOLARSHIPS & PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO YOUTH

Passport to College Promise Scholarship

Students may be eligible to receive a scholarship per academic year to assist with the cost attending college. Eligible students may also receive specialized support services from college staff, and the College Success Foundation. For more information about eligibility and how to apply, go to: www.wsac.wa.gov or call 1-888-535-0747 option #5.

Governors' Scholarship

The Washington State Governors' Scholarship for Foster Youth is a scholarship program that helps young men and women who are currently in an open dependency court order in Washington State or Tribal Court, continue their education and earn a degree. For information about eligibility, how to apply and learn more about other scholarships that may be available, go to: www.collegesuccessfoundation.org.

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program is a national program available to eligible current and former foster youth. For information about eligibility and how to apply, go to: <http://www.independence.wa.gov/programs/etv.asp>.

TheWashBoard.Org

The WashBoard.org is a free, web-based scholarship matching clearinghouse for Washington residents and students attending college in Washington. Students can apply and are then matched to scholarships they may be eligible to apply for. For more information, go to: www.thewashboard.org.

The National Foster Parent Association (NFPA)

The NFPA offers scholarships for foster youth and adopted youth who wish to further their education beyond high school. For information about eligibility and how to apply, go to: www.nfpainc.org.



CONCLUSION

As a social worker, you play an important role in the lives of the youth on your caseload. Instilling in the youth that you believe in their abilities and that you have high hopes for their future, can empower them to plan and be successful in adulthood. Important things you can do to help include:

- Be informed about services available to youth.
- Take the time to explain the services available and the benefits, and highly encourage the youth to participate.
- Listen to youth and be there when they need you.
- Believe in the youth's ability to be successful.

You play a key role in their success. Help turn their key to unlock a brighter future.



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